

NICHOLAS FLOOD

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GREAT SPEECHES.

BY

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

1881

(Reprinted from the 'Canadian Monthly,' for March, 1881.)

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brevitatem, si res petet.—*Cic.*

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MORE than two years have passed away since I laid my pen aside. During that period law and duties akin to legal pursuits have engrossed my time; and it is with some diffidence I venture to write on any subject foreign to my immediate studies; for it is possible that if I ever had any right to appear, even as the meanest recruit in the army of letters, that right is gone; I have been too long away from parade; the shibboleth of expression entitling me to admittance has, perhaps, become corrupted amid the wrangle of the courts, and the jargon of living customs borrowed from a dead past. But inasmuch as what I have to say, apart wholly from form, is calculated to do good to Canada,—calculated, I dare believe, to prove helpful to the generous young men occupied in fitting themselves for life's duties,—ardent and unsoiled spirits whose hopes are tinted with a light which is the herald of a larger day—I will, issuing like Gareth from the smoke and dinge of a lowlier office, attempt a little knightly service. The time necessary for that careful workmanship called for by even the humblest essay is not at my command. I shall, therefore, trusting to the reader's indulgence, put down my thoughts as they arise.

During the present session I have availed myself of every hour I could snatch from laborious duties, to hear, on a question of the largest dimen-

sions, the politicians and statesmen in our Canadian Parliament; and men, not in the front rank, but occupying prominent positions in both the great parties, observing this, have asked me how our leaders would compare with those of the British House of Commons. Their wonder at my replies would alone have suggested this writing, to which, however, as will be seen, I should have been prompted by yet other considerations. A certain sentiment of scorn mingled in my mind with a resentment not unrighteous, when astonishment was expressed that we should have men in Canada who would well compare with, who might stand up to, the best men of any other country.

There is a prevalent idea that the disparity between the conditions of education in the United Kingdom and those of Canada is so great that to believe Canadians could be the equal of Englishmen is like rebellion against the laws of nature. Men born and bred in old countries have, let it be at once admitted, some advantage from the point of view of culture we do not possess. But 'the wine,' says the too cynical, but observant soldier—'the wine she drinks is made of grapes.' We are of the same blood as the men of the United Kingdom. We have not, indeed, the monuments of antiquity, the picture galleries, the old cathedrals, the ancient seats of learning, the cities over which historical forms seem to

lit like the spiritual guardians of a national heritage, the arsenals with the piled-up implements of world-overshadowing greatness, and the emblems, monuments, and trophies of imperial struggles and bloody battles ; the graves of heroes and poets and statesmen ; the moving pictures, the stirring memories which come from stored-up achievement in every field ; the mixture of the venerable and the new—the crumbling ivied wall, which saw feudal barons strike at the life, through mail of proof, protecting the delicate specimens of the modern floriculturist, or the castellated ruin whence great earls overawed the surrounding country, forming the back ground for a croquet party, or a church bazaar ; the shepherd's pipe mingling its plaintive voice with the warlike summons of the clarion ; there the loom, the spinning jenny, the miner's lamp—here the colour and pomp, and circumstance of a conquering race. On the other hand, we have none of the squalor and poverty of an old country. We have no vast superincumbent mass of aristocracy to awe us ; none of the difficulties which arise from the struggle between the latter part of the nineteenth century and modern feudalism. On reflection, I think, I have overstated the case against Canada. We have at least one city unequalled in its situation, of antique lineament and great associations, and in the Capital we have an Imperial site bearing buildings not unworthy of that commanding throne. Nor is it true to say we are wholly, or necessarily to any extent, cut off from the precious historical traditions of Great Britain and Ireland. All we need is the historical imagination to make these treasures our own. Ours by inheritance, certain mental conditions have only to be fulfilled in order to take possession. The gulf is great which separates the historical and the antique from the land of the woodman, the snake fence, the prairie ; but the mind can bridge the chasm ; nay, imagination

has only to spread her wings and it is passed. We have schools and universities, far indeed, at present, from what is desirable ; but where, nevertheless, our sons can hold communion with the mighty dead, catch their spirit, and learn the arts by which they rose to be the cynosure of nations. Inland, we have not the salt sea air, but the wind which sweeps under our cloudless skies and over our snow-clad landscape is not less exhilarating. Too many are ready to subscribe to the statement made by a Yankee, that it is all tail in Canada—meaning thereby that it is all third class. I have found men—and some of these, I blush to say, born on the soil—quietly assuming that no one would stop in Canada if he could make a good living elsewhere, and this, in the face of the fact, that we have settled amongst us a distinguished literary man of large private fortune. Not a few men have resisted strong pecuniary temptation to go to the United States. The career of Mr. Benjamin shows how much in the way of money gains a first-class lawyer foregoes, by remaining in Canada. Why do such remain here ? The answer is to be found in the fact that Canada, although without arts, which would be an anachronism in a young country, has, in her climate, her institutions, her youth, her future, attractions sufficient to fix the affections. In one of those fields to which the word art is applied with peculiar appropriateness, we have made a good beginning. From Mr. L. R. O'Brien, Mrs. Schriever, Mr. J. C. Forbes, and their associates in the Society of Artists, we have not merely the promise of the future Academy, but present results marked by sincere workmanship and permanent value.

This want of self-belief is the one drawback of young peoples who are too often ready to efface themselves before whatever comes with a foreign imprimatur. There is in certain quarters a sort of despair of art of any kind in

Canada. Some time ago, one of the leading papers, the *Mail*, characterised Canadian literature as 'Hog's Wash,' and the other day the *Globe* speaking of Monsieur Louis H. Fréchette, the Canadian poet, who sings in French, said, he had a career, but he would not find it on this continent. Why not on this continent? Nay, why not in his own beloved country? The people must take this in hand. The poet and artist cannot look for recognition to the worshippers of gold, some of whom are no better than public robbers. In England, in France, the wealthy and noble will be glad to honour them—shall the traditional disgrace of Nazareth rest, in the opinion of Canada's own children, on Canada? Is no good to come out of her? It is lamentable to think that had M. Fréchette not been crowned in Paris, most of our own people would have thought him a worthless doggerel-monger, deserving only of tolerant pity. If he has to find a career elsewhere he will have to refurbish his imagination, which is now steeped in local tints; the lakes, the mighty rivers, the snowy landscape, the bright skies of Canada, the blizzard of winter, the rapid vegetation of May, all these are reflected in his song. He is our first national poet. The heroes of Canadian history call forth the deepest and most touching notes of his lyre. The picture of the old age of Papineau is suffused with more than the atmosphere of Canada; it has over it the simplicity and elevation of heroic times. In the 'Nuit d'Eté'—a poem which has all the tenderness and subtle music of Alfred de Musset, with a purity to which the French poet was a stranger—could hardly be understood by any one not a Canadian; the pictures are all racy of this soil; the vast solitudes, the meteoric sky, the sonorous pines, the young man seeing his sweetheart home, the liberty, the confidence, the long farewell. The national poet is a singer, in whose song we find his time and country. In the little poem on

Québec, the contemporary feeling is painted on the back ground of the majestic river, which flows past its storied citadel.

Careful observation of the way the Canadian Parliament gets through its work has given me a high idea of its business capacity. I have been constrained to admire the ability, the statesmanlike manner and workmanlike qualities of the average member. The whole body, as a legislative machine, is, on the whole, efficient. You can hardly conceive a question affecting legislation on which from some member of that body an authoritative opinion could not be had. Skilled farmers, leading merchants, the best lawyers in the Dominion, doctors in abundance, cattle breeders, travellers, pioneers, manufacturers, miners, mechanics, engineers, ex-contractors, and, like leaven in the lump, or steel on the ridge of the wedge, men who have studied the best which has been written on one or two subjects at least, of large experience in public affairs, who have met and communed and fought in friendly contests the leading spirits of other lands—all bring their spoils of experience to the hive.

How would Sir Charles Tupper, or Mr. Blake, or Sir John Macdonald, or Sir Leonard Tilley, or Mr. Macdougall, or Mr. Mackenzie, or Sir Richard Cartwright, or Mr. Langevin, or Mr. Huntington compare with the statesmen of the English Parliament? This question is the summary of a number of questions addressed to me at several times by different persons. Now, it was an admirer of Sir Charles Tupper who said, 'How would Tupper do in England?'—again, a follower of Mr. Blake, who made a similar demand. My answer was, that either one of our leading statesmen would take a prominent place in the House of Commons in England; that, moreover, of three or four of them it might be said with certainty that, unless the stars in their courses fought against them, they would attain the place of First Minister.

Sir John Macdonald is a type of politician which has never failed to delight the English people—the man who, like Palmerston, can work hard, do strong things, hold his purpose, never lose sight for a moment of the honour and welfare of his country, and yet crack his joke and have his laugh, full of courage and good spirits and kindly fun. I am not going to talk politics here. The place forbids it, if my own quasi-judicial position had not been before-hand with a veto. But I apprehend there is nothing to prevent me criticising the ability of our public men ; praising their admirable qualities clearly distinguishable from opinions, and from prejudices in the nature of opinions, and animadverting on their defects in mental endowments, their faults of method, or their errors in tactics, not as politicians or party leaders, but as orators. To return. Sir John Macdonald in the English House of Commons would have been equal, in my opinion, to Mr. Disraeli in finesse, in the art of forming combinations and managing men. He never could have equalled him in invective, or in epigram, or in force as an orator. Sir John Macdonald brings up his artillery with more ease. He is always human, even in his attacks. Lord Beaconsfield, as Mr. Disraeli, in the House of Commons, approached his opponent like some serpentine monster, coiled himself ruthlessly round him, fascinated with his gaze, and struck out with venomous fang. But Sir John is probably the better debater of the two. His delivery is lively, natural, mercurial ; Lord Beaconsfield's is laboured. The power of making a statement is not the forte of the author of 'Endymion.' Sir John Macdonald makes a luminous statement, and his reasoning faculty is at least as high as Lord Beaconsfield's. He has very little, comparatively, of the latter's *curiosa felicitas* in coining phrases, but his humour is more spontaneous. Lord Beaconsfield has the charm which is

inseparable from genius, but it may well be doubted if his power of conciliating men and fixing their affections surpasses that of the Prime Minister of the Dominion. I am sure that in sober, strong sense the balance is in favour of the Canadian statesman. There is nothing viewy about Sir John Macdonald. Though a man of imagination, reason is lord every time.

Sir John Macdonald is perhaps the only man in the House whose speaking combines all the qualities necessary to complete effectiveness as a debater, and whose speeches could be pointed to with justice as useful models. They combine clearness and fulness of statement, vigorous reasoning, ample information, the play of fancy, the light of wit ; and they have what no other speeches heard in that House since Thomas D'Arcy McGee and Joseph Howe were there have had, the flavour of literary culture. In the old world gentlemen are accustomed to put their whiskey in a wine cask to improve the flavour. Everything flowery is offensive in oratory. Literary culture is not necessary to make a great orator. Nevertheless the ideal oratory will always come, as it were, from a vessel which has often been filled at Pierian founts—will betray a nature saturated with the thoughts and language of the great teachers of the world. 'We remember,' says an able writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, speaking of Lord Beaconsfield, 'to have heard him say in one of his felicitous after-dinner speeches, that the reason the Hebrews and the Greeks were by far the most powerful races in history is, that they had a literature. The same remark might apply to statesmen : no oratory, no diplomacy, no legislative ingenuity, confers so great and lasting an influence on a ruler of men as that which he derives from a combination of literary excellence with political power.'

There was one other man, indeed, in that House since the time of D'Arcy McGee and Howe all the movements

of whose mind were radiant with the gleam of the highest culture. I speak of one whose name I may, without affectation, say it is hard for me to write without renewing the tears which fell when I heard of his death. Strong in all the faculties of mind, without affectation, wholly free from conceit, so noble that envy died in his company, he was made to do great things with ease, and to win rapid success with universal acclamation. He was an innate gentleman. Only those who were bad could know him without loving him. He was that 'good man' of whom St. Paul speaks, for whom those who might hesitate to sacrifice themselves for the just, 'would almost dare to die.' A great loss to the bench, he will, if possible, be a greater loss to his University. He was calculated to supply that literary feeling which is so conspicuous by its absence in the foremost officers of the University, and the absence of which is so much to be regretted. Men who, having taken their degree, plunge into a laborious profession, and spend twenty or thirty years in the legal mill, unless they are endowed with the happiest aptitudes, and have (this does not happen once in five hundred times) cultivated these, will generally have as much literary flavour about them as a smoked herring. Chief Justice Moss, or 'Tom Moss,' as he is still affectionately called—having shown how well he was calculated to serve his country in parliament, passed on to the Bench, whence, having for all too brief a period presided over the highest Court in the Province, with rare dignity and success, and given promise of making a name in Canada such as Mansfield made in England, has gone from honours and hopes and usefulness. If the harsh fates might have been broken! If the gods had only loved him less well! With his passing out of parliament the hope of adding something more of colour and grace and charm

to its debates was destroyed for the time. There are distinguished graduates in parliament, but they only prove that a man may apparently be educated at our universities without becoming cultivated, just as one sometimes sees the star of knighthood glitter on the breast of one who does not know what a chivalrous impulse is. We have a few proprietors of newspapers, and they represent a most important interest. But the proprietor of a newspaper is not necessarily the subject of the refining and elevating influences of literature any more than a blind milch cow belonging to Mathew Arnold must prove the embodiment of 'sweetness and light.'

Mr. Blake, were he a man of ordinary force, would hardly deserve the name of an orator. The greatest—the most essential—gift for an orator is force, and this he has in the highest degree. 'Force,' says a great authority, 'is the sole characteristic excellence of an orator; it is almost the only one that can be of any service to him.' This is stating the case too strongly. Again, the same writer says: 'To be a great orator does not require the highest faculties of the human mind, but it requires the highest exertion of the common faculties of our nature.' Mr. Blake's intellect is strong, well equipped, quick. His mastery of facts is astonishing. He is hardly so successful when he deals with figures. His command of language leaves little to be desired for immediate effectiveness. But there is a total absence of literary tissue in his speeches, and there being nothing to relieve the excellent monotony, they are not easy reading—and how speeches will read has become an important question in modern times. But this is a point I must recur to again. I have not the least doubt that if Mr. Blake were to go into the English House of Commons now, he would in a very brief time be in a Liberal Ministry. The fight for the first place would soon be

between him and Sir William Harcourt, and the result would be easy to forecast.

Mr. Mackenzie is one of the very first debaters in Parliament, and his speaking not only indicates with what strong powers nature endowed him, but how much is within the reach of assiduous cultivation. No one on hearing his first speech could have believed he would ripen into a consummate master of parliamentary discussion. He is always ready, be the subject what it may. His vast stores of political knowledge have been amassed in the course of a life devoted to party warfare, on which probably an idle day never dawned. Mr. Forster, the present Secretary for Ireland, is the man he reminds me of; but he is readier than Mr. Forster, and has a better style and better delivery.

Sir Charles Tupper's most distinguishing characteristic, like that of Mr. Blake's, is force. Though he has not the scholarship nor finish of Mr. Gladstone, it is with Mr. Gladstone—were I searching for a comparison—I should compare him. Yet they are dissimilar in so many other ways, that the choice does not seem happy. They are alike however, in this: Extraordinary capacity for work, power of going from place to place, and making great speeches with little or no time for rest or study. Different in kind, his command of expression is as ready and effective as Mr. Gladstone's. He has the faculty of growth—the sure mark of a superior mind when found in a man over forty. He has, in recent years, soared beyond himself, and developed a lightness of touch which one would not have suspected to have been within his reach.

I am sure both he and Mr. Blake speak too long. If they could take off about thirty per cent. in time without impairing the texture of thought; if they could pack closer; how much more effective both would be. Sir Charles Tupper is not content while a single wall of the enemy's defences re-

mains standing. Mr. Blake elaborates details in accordance with the habit of years, and can hardly resist the lure of a technicality. Neither seems ever to have considered that a suggestion for a popular audience may be as good as a syllogism; that the arch of a pregnant thought may be trusted to round itself to completeness in the quick sympathy of the hearer. When I said something like this to a gentleman, whose duty keeps him a close observer of parliament, he replied: 'But then Blake and Tupper must cease to be Blake and Tupper.' The extraordinary force of both these remarkable men has made them careless of arts absolutely necessary to others.

I have given my opinion of the career which would await Mr. Blake in the English Parliament. If Sir Charles Tupper went into the English House of Commons now, before two years had elapsed—that being about the time it would take him to master English politics—he would be leader of the Conservative party in that chamber. The party wants a leader there. Sir Stafford Northcote is a respectable mediocrity, and pitting him against the Liberal leaders is like throwing a Christian to the lions. There is no use in trying to make a leader of a party out of anything short of first-class material. The result is always debilitating to the party, and disappointing and mortifying to the individual. The weight of responsibility would, as was the case with Mr. Gladstone, develop in Sir Charles Tupper unsuspected strength for the position. Before Mr. Gladstone assumed the leadership, it used to be said he could not lead; he was a good second, and a splendid speaker, but that was all. The time came when his leadership was acknowledged to be a necessity to his party. The incapable and the envious always bark at clever men, and even sometimes succeed in worrying them, until these fulfil their destiny, and then the barking and snarling are exchanged for fawning

and feet-licking. 'Why don't you follow the hounds as I do?' said a sportsman to a witty, ailing statesman. 'I make the hounds follow me,' was the prompt reply.

The distinguishing characteristic of Sir Leonard Tilley is sincerity. No man could appear more lost in his subject. This is a great element in persuasiveness. This earnestness is enhanced by a style of pure Saxon and unaffected simplicity. His ease of expression would at once mark him out in the English House of Commons, and the 'auctoritas' with which he speaks give him weight and secure a following. He has the rare power of making a budget speech interesting, a power which no Chancellor of the Exchequer I ever heard in the English House of Commons had, Mr. Gladstone, of course, always excepted, who, in the art of financial statement, leaves all other men behind.

Sir Richard Cartwright—perhaps at once the severest and the most eulogistic thing that could be said of him, is that he never does justice to himself. He can hit hard, but his desire to hit too hard sends the blow wide. In the course of his speech he made a quotation which was first employed for political purposes by Mr. Lowe, now Lord Sherbrooke. They are noble lines, but the House laughed when they were quoted, evidently supposing them to be of a humorous character—

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful made him falsely true.

Happy is the man who has not, one time or other, been placed in this dreadful dilemma. The situation is tragic. But, owing to some want of manner in the orator, the House evidently supposed they were humorous lines. Sir Richard Cartwright reminds me of a former Home Secretary, Mr. Ayrton. But Sir Richard is a better read man, with stronger powers of thought and expression. Mr. Ayrton had not more sweetness and light than Sir Richard. What an Ayrton did, therefore, a Cartwright could have done.

Mr. Macdougall is a finished speaker. Rather a great debater than a great orator, he has nearly every gift by which a man can command the attention of his fellow-men; presence, delivery, a noble diction, constitutional grasp, a mind well stored with political facts. He is not so much wanting in passion as in sympathy. He has no humour. A formidable critic, the independent turn of his mind would have suited him more for the arena of English than Canadian politics. Where great questions agitated men's minds, in times of commotion and peril, he might have made a party follow him. But he has too little of that most attractive of all elements in character or manner,—the power of creating personal attachment,—to secure a following under less heroic conditions.

Speaking, now-a-days, is hardly intended to persuade Parliaments. The orator has the audience outside the House in his eye. But a long speech is undoubtedly a bar in the way of getting at the popular mind. I am greatly mistaken if the masses care to follow lengthy elaborations of detail, and would not be more easily influenced by broad, bold effects. The length is the more serious when there is nothing but a vigorous discussion of the subject matter to bear the reader on. The road is a good macadamized road, but there are no happy fields, no wooded vistas, no glimpses of the distant sea, to gladden and relieve the eye. You might hear Sir Charles Tupper and Mr. Blake for ever, without finding any reason to suspect they had committed the crime of reading a book. All this is undoubtedly a measure of their power. But it is a reason why compression and brevity should, as far as is consistent with effectiveness, be studied.

What, however, is pardonable in leaders, whose vigour of delivery makes us forget the clock is without excuse in smaller men. There is reason to believe that many think a long speech

a great speech ; 'So and so made a great speech, he spoke for four hours, or five hours, or six hours,' as the case may be.

The weak point of the average politician is the desire to make a great speech. Some such receipt as the following seems to be present to the mind of the budding Demosthenes :—

Take long extracts from the leading organ of the opposite party. Mix these with quotations from the speeches of your opponents. Throw in a little bitterness. Let there be a currant or two of slander and a plum of scurility. Make an incongruous piece of pastry of the whole, and there you are. Don't forget the figures—not of speech, which yet must not be forgotten, and need not be elegant,—but of arithmetic. These are a perfect god-send for the orator who aims at drawing out his 'linked sweetness' for hours. Let them be drawn up in battalions, so as in their stern array to be all but incomprehensible and entirely repulsive to the ordinary reader, and your great speech is complete. Add to this an old joke or two, of which you will have forgotten the point, and a poetic quotation, without the least relevancy, to be introduced with the words 'as the poet says.' Be sure when your ideas, or somebody else's, are failing you to cry out, 'Well, Mr. Speaker ! What do we find ? What do we find, sir ? Yes, Mr. Speaker—what do we find ?' Whereupon you will draw out of your pocket a yellow bit of newspaper of ten or twenty years before, and while you uplift your finger you will read the precious contents to a deeply interested and edified assembly. Conclude by hinting that the leader of the party opposed to you is a brigand or an unconvicted felon, and having shaken your fist at him and prophesied that he will meet some disgraceful end, sit down with the consciousness that you have contributed to the immortal pages of *Hansard*, at large expense to your contemporaries, a monument of which pos-

terity would see you where it is said the wicked do not cease from troubling, ere they would read a line. It would be natural for a retailer of cheese or sausages to measure a speech by the yard or the pound weight. But looked on as a means of persuasion this test is hardly conclusive.

No man would call a painting great because it covered miles of canvas, or a house a great building because it sprawled over half an acre of land, or a poem a great poem because it contained as many verses as Homer and Virgil combined ever wrote. If a picture produces great and striking and true effects, though the scale may be small, we say it is a great painting. The extent to which strength, beauty and utility are combined will decide the character of a building. In the poem, quality is the sole test. A few verses have stirred the hearts of nations, and almost regenerated men. If Burns never wrote anything but 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' he would stand out in history as a great poet. He wants to create heroic emotion, and in a few lines he strikes, with fingers of fire, not merely on the master chords of the Scottish nature, but on those which are common to them with all brave peoples. He touches his own countrymen at once as men and Scotchmen. The man with Scotch blood in his veins that could read this song without being a follower of Bruce for the time, and desiring to die for his country, would not deserve to live. Men, not Scotchmen, can never repeat that song without longing to be soldiers and feeling a deep hunger for battle, just as Campbell's lines on the death of Nelson wake up the smouldering fires of the sea king in the blood—the reachings out after adventure, and daring deeds, the charms of danger, the rough caresses of the stormy sea.

Reasoning from analogy, one should expect that when people spoke of great speeches they would mean great utterances, which had produced great

effects on men as rational or emotional beings, or as both. When Napoleon, seeking to stir the imagination of his soldiery, told them forty centuries looked down on them, he made a great speech ; so did Nelson, when he sent, like a bugle-call from ship to ship, the stirring words for ever associated with Trafalgar. When the American orator, dwelling on the duty of his countrymen in a great emergency, pointed to Washington's portrait and said : ' If those pictured lips could speak,'—he made a great speech if he never said another word. He had said more to move his countrymen than if he had delayed them with arguments and bewildered them with carefully arranged statistics regarding the evil of the policy he deprecated. When the Duke of Wellington said, ' The Queen's Government must be carried on,' he uttered a great speech by which he made converts by the dozens. When yet a little boy I heard the Rev. Hugh Stowell preach. He took for his text the words, ' Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,' and commenced thus: ' The bird that sings the sweetest and soars the highest is the bird that makes his nest the lowest.' There was a great sermon which I have never forgotten. How brief are Paul's letters—but what colossal effects they have produced and continue to produce ! These are great utterances on religious subjects. You have profound thought combined with heroic devotion—either of which will make a great sermon—which is a speech delivered on a religious subject and for practical ends. Whitfield had no thought. There is nothing, as people say, in his sermons. But look at the effect he produced—the fervid soul melting his hearers. In the same way the inner fire burned out on the hearers of Wesley.

Mr. Rainsford puts more work into his sermons now than he used when he first came amongst us, but his ser-

mons are not so effective. Then you felt that a really fervid soul was speaking to you, and his blunders of thought and expression were trifles. But the fire is low now ; the rôle of the evangelist, not that of the thinker, is what he was most suited for.

On a recent occasion at St. Alban's, Ottawa, Dr. Jones denounced the frivolity of the capital, declared it was given up to the worship of Bacchus and Venus, and then supposing the apostle to visit the city, elaborated a dialogue between the incumbent of St. Alban's, full of forms and ceremonies, and the rugged apostle of the Gentiles, who set no store by things indifferent. The apostle addressed Dr. Jones as ' Mr. Presbyter,' and ' Friend Presbyter.' I never met Paul. But I am familiar with his writings, and hold the theory that the style is the manifestation of the man. The reader may judge of my astonishment on this occasion, when I found that Paul carried his principle of being all things to all men, so far as to transform himself into the double of Dr. Jones. Versatility has never been emphasized as a characteristic of the devoted Jew. Great progress is, no doubt, possible in the other world. Be that as it may, Paul was no longer the Paul with a hurrying style, thoughts struggling for expression, aspirations divinely heroic, self-abnegation to the death. No; he spoke remarkably like Dr. Jones. ' I perceive,' said the Apostle, ' that some persons take an interest in the ornamentation of the house of God. I see "Alpha" and "Omega" under which name the Lord had revealed himself to my brother John, over the sacred table where the commemorative "sacrifice" is offered. I see many divine symbols—and in my day people believed in symbols—but where are the people ?' Very like Paul ! Very like a whale. The whole thing was like a bandbox getting up a dialogue between itself and a thunder cloud.

If St. Paul really entered that church on that day, what he would have asked

was, not where the people were, but where were the men to preach the Gospel. The Apostle (according to Jones) spoke at great length, and was very severe on the people, but his severity created only amusement, smiling and tittering being the order of the day. He said nothing about the extraordinary language held at the Church Conference in Toronto, the Bishop telling 'his' clergy to cultivate only a 'street recognition' with men every whit as well bred and well educated as they, and, above all, engaged in the same great work ; Mr. Rainsford bringing an indictment against a whole body of Christians, which an explanation did not improve. Where are the great pulpit speeches to come from in the Church of England when such is the spirit which is abroad ? From Dr. Potts, Dr. Hunter, the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, and Principal Grant, of Kingston, I have heard sermons which showed that the men were alive to the problems of the time. But in my own church I find feebleness the rule, and a childish devotion to forms and fripperies, ecclesiastical millinery, band-box devotion, and spiritual conceit founded on mistaken theories. Such language as that held at the Church Conference—and it is a sample of some I have heard from the pulpit—betrays the vices without the virtues of bigotry ; we have the intolerance without the earnestness. The attack on the Methodists was doubly inappropriate from Mr. Rainsford, because his chief claim to recognition seemed to be that he was what somebody declared the poet Southey to be, 'a Methodist of the Church of England.' The most striking thing about him originally was—and this enabled him to preach effective sermons—that he was an old country University man, in the Church of England, with the opinions and manners of Moody and Sankey. When do sermons anywhere out of one or two churches move men now ? There are essays bad, good and indifferent—mostly bad. But

where is the wind amongst the dry bones ? The amount of religious activity apart from the social activity which is called religious, is very small. No doubt the heart is hard, and the devil active. But this is all the more reason why fire is needed to fight the one and melt the other.

At the bar there is no limit as to the length of a speech, but the exhaustion of all the arguments that can be stated for your case. The forensic orations of Demosthenes are three and four and five times as long as his political speeches. In addressing a jury, the one thing to consider is the result. O'Connell used to say : 'A good speech is a good thing, but the verdict is the thing.' Crabb Robinson, in his 'Diary,' tells of one Henry Cooper, who was his senior on circuit, and in many respects an extraordinary man. His memory, his cleverness, his attainments were striking, but so adds the diarist, was his want of judgment, and it often happened that his clever and amusing hits told as much against as for his client. One day he was entertaining the whole Court, when Rolfe (afterwards Lord Cranworth), whispered to Crabb Robinson, ' How clever that is ! How I thank God I am not so clever.' Cooper was forgetting the object he should have had in view and sacrificing his client's interests to his own vanity.

I am sick of speeches made from the pulpit, made at the bar, made in politics, under the inspiration of vanity. But, in politics, and especially in the House of Commons—owing to *Hansard*—speaking up to a misleading and degrading standard is most common. Many useful things are forgotten, but most of all, that the power of attention is limited. After the main arguments for or against a measure have been stated once or twice, the proper thing for any speaker who follows is to refer to these arguments, not to state them afresh, and then to proceed to make some new points. This course is common sense ; it is respectful to parliament ; it is respectful to one's self ; it

is considerate for the time and money of the country ; it is the surest passport to success. If the same thing is to be repeated over and over again, it is not to listen I want but to sleep. If a fresh point has occurred to a speaker, by going over old points, he obscures what would prove interesting and enlightening. In the House and the papers the next day the old and worn and threadbare repel, and the one or two useful things never reach the mind.

At the core of all sound criticism on human efforts are two questions—What is the end aimed at? How far has the end been gained? These two questions, applied as a wise man would apply them, ought to be exhaustive. The end aimed at by a cutler in making a knife is to produce an implement which shall cut. But numberless side considerations have to be taken into account. A clear conception of the object sought is not enough to enable one to give an authoritative opinion. There must be in the mind of the critic a knowledge of what has already been achieved in the particular field ; the possibilities within the grasp of arduous endeavour there ; he should apprehend how effects may be most economically produced ; his idea of man should be as wide and various as that complex mystery, so as to see how far all the keys of life are touched, and whether in each case to harmonious or discordant issues. The convenient habit of fixing attention on mental functions has made us the slaves of a barren and futile analysis, weakened our hold on the fact that the mind is one, affected in its constitution through all the range of its capacities by whatever appeals to the smallest of its powers. The common-place circumstance of a sound tooth aching in sympathy with one the subject of decay has moral analogies. For whatever is said or done, an ideal standard would exact regard to man's nature in all its manifold developments. The lofty and the

practical really meet. A high inspiration never fails to reach the inmost springs of even the meanest hearer, though sinister motives may counter-vail the suggestions of the better nature. The soul, like a stronghold, is soonest taken when approached from all sides.

Henry Flood, who created, in the face of corruption, in the teeth of unscrupulous power unscrupulously used, in a parliament of pensioners and place-men, an opposition, could never have done this at that time, had he not united to strong logical faculties, statesmanlike attainments and scathing invective, a charm of expression at once manly and attractive, which won attention from the interested and unwilling. The influence exercised by Mr. Bright is due not only to his force, or to his reasoning power. Whatever cause he advocates gains incalculably, because, while he seeks to convince, he makes certain he shall delight. I once heard Mr. Lowe, in the midst of a denunciation of Mr. Bright's opinions, say he would walk twenty miles any day in the year to hear him speak. An old friend of mine, the late Professor Rushton, sought to learn the secret of the great tribune's charm. Waiting on him, he asked—1st, whether, in his opinion, the orator was born and not made? 2nd, whether he (Mr. Bright) had carefully studied the ancient orators? 3rd, to what he attributed his command over the English tongue? Mr. Bright replied that, in his opinion, the orator was born and not made, that he had not studied the ancient orators, and hardly thought doing so would repay time and trouble, and that whatever facility he possessed in conveying his ideas to his fellows, was due to the constant perusal of old English poetry. The scent of old English songs pervades his style. It is wrought in with web and woof. This is the only way literature can be of any value to a speaker. Lugging in a quotation for purposes of grace only, is putting a jewel in a swine's snout; the hog is

not less a hog ; indeed, his swinish qualities are emphasized by the incongruous gems. Sterne, I think it is, who says that the dwarf who brings a standard of height along with him is something worse than a dwarf.

All that we know of public speakers who have attained eminence, from Demosthenes to Bright, shows that excellence can be had only at the price of hard work. The genius of oratory does not smile on us without years of courtship. Mr. Gladstone, some time ago, dwelt on the evidence of painstaking thought and labour found in the MS. of Mr. Canning. How Brougham worked is familiar to all who have read the works of that great but vain and garrulous man. Yet, probably, there is no art in which so many are ambitious of excellence as that of speaking, and in which they think success so easy.

Now, what is the end aimed at in speaking—whether in the forum, from the pulpit, or in the Senate ? Lectures do not properly come under the head of speeches. The name imports that a lecture is a composition thought out, and prepared, and written in the study for the purpose of being read. If a lecture pleases, if it has enabled you to pass an evening pleasantly or instructively, it has justified itself. Not so a sermon, a legal argument, an address to a jury, a speech in Parliament or on the stump. What raises the sermon, the legal argument, the jury speech, the political harangue, infinitely above the lecture is this—they all contemplate action as an end. And so far as any one of them, or any part of any one of them, is not instinct with this aim, the speaker is guilty of impertinence. The end aimed at is not to delight the imagination or tickle the fancy, though delighting the imagination and tickling the fancy help you on your way, but to convince the judgment. How can this best be done ? By giving adequate reasons why the course you propose must be considered the best, and inflaming the

passions so as to bring them to your aid. The logic should be red hot. Most oratory in modern times is addressed to the masses of the inhabitants of the country of the orator. Therefore a speech, or sermon, or oration, which aims at persuasion must be easy of comprehension, must appeal to the understanding, must court the weaknesses of those whom we try to persuade, and must pay some regard to the fact that we do not live in antediluvian times, when, no doubt, a few years might be spared to digest a discourse.

A great deal of the speaking in the course of the Syndicate debate was excellent, a great deal made me fancy that the speakers had forgotten all that Hazlitt says on the subject of oratory, with the exception of his striking but only half-true words, 'that modesty, impartiality and candour, are *not* the virtues of a public speaker.' They certainly forgot that brevity is. The first men in the British Parliament rarely speak beyond an hour or an hour and a quarter. The latter is the utmost limit Mr. Bright used to allow himself. Mr. Cobden always spoke within moderate compass. Mr. Gladstone is diffuse. Yet his speech moving the House into Committee to consider the Acts relating to the Irish Church, contained only twelve thousand words. His speech on March 2nd, 1869, bringing in the church measure—a large question necessitating a detailed statement and elaborate calculations, contained only 22,680 words. Sir Charles Tupper's speech introducing his Syndicate resolutions, contained 36,000 words ; Mr. Blake's reply 32,400 words. Mr. Lowe's speech on the second reading of the Borough Franchise Bill, 1866 contained 6,960 words ; his speech on the first reading of the Representation of the People's Bill, 9,280 words ; on the second reading, 16,008 words. Grattan's great speech on the rights of Ireland, contained 13,524 words ; on 'Simple Repeal,' in reply to Mr. Flood, 7,674 words ; his philippic

against Flood, 2,352 words ; the first of his anti-union speeches, 5,880 words. Windham's ' Defence of the Country,' one of the longest of his speeches, contained 8,280 words; Huskinson's great speech on the ' Effects of the Free Trade system on the Silk Manufacture,' 23,322 words.

Now let us look again at home, and we shall, at all events, see abundant reason to be proud of the industry of our public men :—

Mr. Langevin's speech contained 17,640 words; Sir Richard Cartwright's, 14,440 ; Mr. McLennan's, 5,760 ; Mr. Ives', 12,600 ; Mr. Laurier's, 5,580 ; Mr. Anglin's, 11,520 ; Mr. Mills', 16,560 ; Mr. McCallum's, 4,320 ; Mr. Coursol's, 3,960 ; Mr. Charlton's, 12,235 ; Mr. Patterson's (Essex), 4,402 ; Mr. Rinfert's, 3,900 ; Mr. Gigault's, 2,850 ; Mr. Longley's, 5,760 ; Mr. Ross's (Middlesex), 12,135 ; Mr. Rykert's, 12,500 ; Mr. Cockburn's (Muskoka), 4,320 ; Mr. Mackenzie's, 7,200 ; Mr. Dawson's, 3,950 ; Mr. Wright's, 3,420 ; Sir A. Smith's, 10,420 ; Dr. Bergin's, 9,360 ; Mr. Orton's, 4,860 ; Sir John Macdonald's, 6,840 ; Mr. Blake's (proposing amendment and exclusive of this), 30,000 ; Sir Leonard Tilley's, 7,187 ; Mr. Kirkpatrick's, 10,440 ; Mr. Guthrie's, 10,799 ; Mr. White's (Cardwell), 18,000 ; Mr. Casey's, 5,400 ; Mr. Macdougall's, 9,360 ; Mr. Cameron's (Victoria), 5,580 ; Mr. Scott's, 3,240 ; Mr. White's (Renfrew), 1,580 ; Mr. Rymal's, 5,040 ; Mr. Tasse's, 5,080 ; Dalton McCarthy's, 7,560.

A great man as well as orator placed Demosthenes at the head of the art of speaking, and when we think of the orations of the patriotic, fearless, but prudent Athenian statesman, much as we believe and rejoice in the daily press, we cannot but bless God that there was a time in the world's history when the newspaper was unknown. Had newspapers existed in the days of Demosthenes, what quotations we should have had from the leading papers of Athens and Macedon. We

should have had—did I say ? The orations of Demosthenes would never have been thought worthy of being handed down to posterity. Judged by the standard of the mediocre members of either party in Canada, how poor Demosthenes shines ! Why his first olynthiac does not contain two thousand five hundred and twenty words ; the second only two thousand seven hundred ; the third two thousand eight hundred and eighty. When the Alabamas of Philip were chasing Athenian commerce from the *Æ*gean, the first philippic was delivered. If we assume that the whole of this oration was spoken at the same time, and allow six pages for the statement of ways and means, and four for the letter of Philip to the Eubceans, we have seven thousand two hundred and eighty words. The oration by which he averted war, bearing down a host of flattering orators, contains only 1,960 words. The third and fourth philippic contain respectively 10,080 and 6,480 words.

I do not care much what other people have done. I prefer to ask what, under any given circumstances, the reason of the case suggests. I will not say the above figures make out any case against Mr. Blake or Dr. Tupper, because we live in an age when the mind is more arithmetical than it used to be. Nor does a subject often arise in which so many calculations must be made as in this last great issue connected with the Pacific Railway. But if Grattan, a leader, could say all it was necessary for him to say on the ' Rights of Ireland,' in 13,524 words : on ' Simple Repeal,' in 7,624 words ; against the ' Union,' in 5,880 words ; if Windham could say all he wanted on the ' Defence of the Country,' in 8,280 words ; if Demosthenes, in less than 8,000 words, could state the case against Philip of Macedon ; if the same great statesman and leader could usually overbear all opposition by his logical and fervid thoughts, bristling with solid arguments, compressed into from two to

three thousands words—is it not likely that the subordinate members of both parties speak too long, when they equal or exceed the limits allowed themselves by such great leaders as I have mentioned? The speeches of Fox, Channing, Pitt, would yield like results with those analysed.

Easy writing makes hard reading. The same is true of easy speech-making. South, when complimented on the shortness of a sermon, characterised by his usual eloquence, said, that had he had time he would have made it shorter. To realize the fulness of suggestion in the above statistics it must be borne in mind that those men who spoke thus briefly thought long and burned the midnight oil, gave muscle to reason, wings to imagination, and the eagle-glance to high purpose, by conversation with the best and greatest subjects. They were not thinking how to rig a convention, but how to become great men—great intrinsically, so that they could bear to have their official trappings taken from them and stand forth in all the naked majesty of inherent power. The hero is not less a hero when stripped of his star, and the great orator brings himself, as somebody said of Burke, along with him. He has not on each occasion when it is necessary for him to plead the cause of his country to retire to make himself up like a meretricious beauty. He does not fear surprise. He does not shrink from conversation. The outlines of his mind, as presented to the public, will bear pinching. ‘*Nemo poterit esse*,’ says Cicero, who took all knowledge for his province, *omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium rerum magnarum atque artium scientiam consecutus.*’ It is not poring over the *Globe* or *Mail*, and filling a scrap-book with the rags of political discussion which will make an orator—by which, I mean, a speaker approaching the maximum of utility and practical effectiveness, able to counsel wisely and persuade men to follow his counsels; not guzzling cham-

pagne and eating heavy dinners; not an eye to the main chance and swaggering delight in your own abasement; not small spurts of study and long lapses of idleness. The true orator must have a love of justice, a hatred of wrong, a delight in liberty, a passion for the people’s welfare, wide knowledge mastered into system by prolonged reflection on the problems of his time; his heart must have been compounded by nature in her most generous mood, and his brain originally strong, made supple, swift, hardy, enduring, by incessant training and persistent toil.

I have not, of course, heard all the speakers, and can only speak of those I heard. Among these, I was much struck by the speaking of Messrs. Ross, Laurier, Cameron (Huron), Guthrie, Charlton and Rymal, on the Opposition side; and by Messrs. Cameron (Victoria), Plumb, White, of Cardwell, and White, of Renfrew, Royal, Rykert, and Dalton McCarthy. In one or two instances, there was repulsive and discordant slang. But, as a rule, the distinguishing feature of the speaking of these gentlemen, was grappling with the question in an independent and business-like way. They seemed to be aware, on the whole, that the duty of a speaker is to seize the question by the throat, to worry it with his own incisors and molars, and, not like a caterpillar on decaying leaves, to draw out an ignoble rhetorical existence on the strength of scraps of newspapers; nor yet to prove himself a statesman by severely trying his own and his audience’s physical strength, while hurling through space common-places or well-worn arguments, as though they were thunderbolts just forged in a mind active with the stormy vigour of great powers engaged on a momentous theme. In their speeches, on the whole, there was little or none of impotent invective or purloined vivacity; nor, save in one instance, quotations sanctioned originally by a master’s use with the edge of brightness

taken off by currency for half a century. Mr. Guthrie spoke like a gentleman, and in a manner to do credit to parliament; Mr. Ross (Middlesex), with much force but, as I think, at too great length; Mr. Cameron (Huron), with the force of a practical man and an astute lawyer; while Mr. Laurier's manner is imbued with the best parliamentary traditions. I wish the people of the Dominion, who are accustomed to read little sneers at Mr. Plumb had heard his speech. Vigorous, terse, pointed, it showed that he has the growing mental energy of a young man full of the future, and his university training and its memories active and enlivening. Mr. Royal's speech was a masterly effort, and Mr. Thomas White's in matter and manner left nothing to be desired.

' Tam knows what's what, full brawley.'

Mr. White, of Renfrew, spoke briefly, but with weight and point. This was debating; 'spreading' oneself is not debating. Mr. Hector Cameron's speech made every one regret he does not speak oftener. Although a great lawyer, and accustomed to meet judges and juries, he had that slight nervousness as he launched off which, according to Cicero, never fails sometime or other to manifest itself in a speaker who has the root of the matter in him. Forceful and dignified, practical and original, his speech displayed a facile command of a fine parliamentary style. Mr. Dalton McCarthy reasons closely and sticks to his point. He is ready, instructive, painstaking and practical. He is emphatically a useful member. Mr. Rymal fell into a hackneyed quotation: (Will nobody catch and kill those fleas, big and little, for ever biting and for ever reappearing?) and I do not fear being accused of hypercriticism, when I say that one of his salutes was not in good taste. To call a man a pocket edition of Judas Iscariot, because he interrupts you may be very clever, though I fail to see it. I noticed it made men on both sides of the House

laugh. It may have been insulting, but two blacks will not make a white, and however insulting, it did not justify Dr. Orton, who, as a professional man, has had presumably advantages which were denied his opponent, in referring to certain functions at one time discharged by Mr. Rymal, functions it may be remarked, in passing, not one whit more repulsive than those discharged every day by medical men. If an employment is honest and useful, there is no reproach in having followed it, though it may not be of a character, proficiency in which would lead to your being knighted. Dr. Orton's sally called forth the remark from Rymal, that he was engaged just then in currying down a jackass. And all this is embalmed amid sweets of the same kind in the immortal pages of *Handsard*! Mr. Rymal is coarse. But he is no popinjay; and the way he was listened to shows how glad an audience is to hear any one possessing real individuality. Mr. Rykert spoiled a good speech by quoting at the end an absurd travesty of a nursery rhyme. With this exception, Mr. Rykert's effort was up to a high mark.

And speaking of quotation, what is its use? The use is like that of an illustration, to make a point or situation more vivid, more emphatic, by a new light, by a suggestion which may be ridiculous, elevating, degrading, which enables you sometimes to put in the hearer's mind what you hardly dare, and could not, put into your own words. The praise which would be fulsome in prose may be elegantly conveyed by a line of poetry, and where prose would fall blunt and innocuous a rhyme will often cling and sting. A well-chosen quotation is like a diamond, useful as a noble kind of ornament and capable of cutting through the brittle sophistry of a pretender. Poetical quotations, however, are not necessary, and therefore their use must always be justified by success. To apply lines of playful satire written on a man of stupendous genius

to an opponent of great talent is not to hit him with a sword, but to crown him with a diadem beyond his rank ; while to make quotations for the sake of quoting is to invite to a banquet of choice dishes and fine wines and give nothing but wind and emptiness. If a hand-saw were to break into a smile the sight could hardly be more purposeless or bewildering on the spectator than is on an audience one of those helpless attempts to display a reading which does not exist, and the very suggestion of the existence of which is incongruous.

Reading speeches is a most reprehensible practice, and one which is unfortunately aided by the desks. The theory of the Chamber is that it is a place to think, to consider, to debate, to take counsel one of another. A written speech is an impertinence with the complexion of a fraud—the very name of Parliament shows that it is intended for the interchange of thought by spokenspeech, and, therefore, of the man's own thoughts. But if a member is permitted to read speeches, he may employ a secretary to do his writing and his speech-making for him, just as some clergymen have been known to buy sermons at so much a dozen. Reading a speech may be an elaborate imposition on the public, and especially on the constituents of the member. One of the papers says Mr. Blake encourages the practice. If he does, he is, as leader of a party, guilty of a very high crime and a very great misdemeanour against the practice of Parliament and the best interests of his country. But I see no evidence that he does. The most ludicrous spectacle I ever saw was at Washington. A member of Congress, arms akimbo, a pile of printed matter before him, from which, striking a theatrical attitude, to a jabbering house, the 'speaker' read out his 'speech.'

Were the practice permitted, it

would end in speeches being put in as read, which would more than ever transfer the consideration of questions from parliament to the stump. The stump has its use ; parliament has its use. But the utility of both is impaired if their functions are not kept distinct. The real object of meeting in parliament is too much lost sight of. If one of the great fathers of parliamentary discussion were to enter our assemblies, and see the pages running hither and thither, whenever the snap of the fingers is heard, members writing, letters and books being sent off to the post, he would feel as much shocked as if he came on a Presbyterian divine keeping the Sabbath by line fishing and skimming a volume of 'Zola' or 'Ouida.'

I have, or think I have, a great deal more to say. But I must not offend against my own precepts. The audience I have been thinking of while writing these hurried lines is not in Ottawa but Toronto, not members of parliament, but the young men who meet every Saturday night in Osgoode Hall, and of whose generosity I have not been able to avail myself this winter as I did last. Unable to criticize them, I have criticised others for their sake—not less impartially, not less wholly free from all political motives, I hope, than if I were speaking in that convention where no politics are allowed to intrude—and as a pledge that my thoughts have often reverted to them, I dedicate to the Osgoode Legal and Literary Society, this brief essay, which from first to last hints at rather than lays down, and establishes the propositions for which I would fain find a home in their minds, and kindred minds throughout the entire Dominion. The present belongs to older men, and may it long belong to them. But the future is for the young. Let them see to it that they shall be equal to their fate.

